

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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R 281020Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7375
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION USUN NY
CINCEUR

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A (DECONTROL 30 APRIL 1979)
TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, SS, MR, MI
SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: LONDON "ECONOMIST" ON SAHAR WAR

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 43, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 865, (C) NOUAKCHOTT 907

1. FOR FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL MONTHS, LONDON "ECONOMIST" LOOKS AT SAHARA GUERRILLA WAR IN APRIL 16 ISSUE (PAGE 71). ACCOMPANYING MAP AVOIDS INACCURACIES OF TIME GRAPHICS (REF A), ALTHOUGH IT, TOO, ERRS SLIGHTLY BY OMITTING LOCATION OF RAILROAD CLASHES AND BY NOT INCLUDING MOST RECENT CLASH AT TICHLA (REF C).

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2. PIECE IS GENERALLY ACCURATE AND SOUND; AS SUCH IT IS RECOMMENDED READING FOR SAHARA WATCHERS. WE ARE VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT IT WAS WRITTEN BY BRITISH FREE-LANCER SUSAN MORGAN (REF B) SINCE IT SOUNDS SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE TWO MISSION OFFICERS WHO TALKED TO MS. MORGAN SECOND WEEK IN MAY.

3. HOWEVER, TWO ASSERTIONS BY ECONOMIST CORRESPONDENT

REQUIRE COMMENT. IT MAY BE TRUE THAT "MANY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS HAVE HAD TO BE POSTPONED OR CANCELLED". BUT PRESIDENT AND GIRM OFFICIALS HAVE EXPLICITLY ASSERTED THE CONTRARY, AND HAVE PUBLICLY EXPRESSED THEIR APPRECIATION TO THEIR SAUDI ARAB FRIENDS FOR MAKING CONTINUED, FULL SPEED AHEAD (IN MAURITANIAN TERMS) IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM POSSIBLE. MOREOVER, MISSION IS UNAWARE OF ANY HARD EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF ECONOMIST CLAIM. SECOND, ECONOMIST ASSERTION THAT "MAURITANIANS ARE BEGINNING TO DOUBT OFFICIAL REPORTS ON WAR IN THEIR RIGIDLY CENSORED PRESS" INCORPORATES FOUR SERIOUS ERRORS IN ITS SHORT COMPASS. (I) ONE AND ONLY NEWSPAPER IS NOT RPT NOT CENSORED RIGIDLY OR LOOSELY. EDITOR AND STAFF ARE REGIME SUPPORTERS WHO GENERALLY FOLLOW PUBLIC INFORMATION PREFERENCES OF GOVERNMENT BUT FROM TIME TO TIME GO OFF IN ANOTHER DIRECTION WITHOUT APPARENT FEAR OR RETRIBUTION. (ONLY THING WHICH IS CLEARLY OFF-LIMITS IS DIRECT PERSONAL ATTACK ON PRESIDENT OR OTHER SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, JUST AS DIRECT, PERSONAL CRITICISM OF BRITISH ROYAL FAMILY IS FROWNED UPON IN UNITED KINGDOM). (II) NEWSPAPER IS READ (IF AT ALL) BY MAURITANIANS FOR RECREATIONAL RATHER THAN INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES. THEY DO NOT RPT NOT DEPEND ON IT FOR NEWS OF EITHER DOMESTIC OR INTERNATIONAL EVENTS. IN ADDITION TO INFORMAL, WORD-OF-MOUTH INFORMATION SYSTEM, MAURITANIANS HAVE DIRECT ACCESS (AS ECONOMIST NOTES) TO DOMESTIC RADIO SERVICES OF ALGERIA, CANARY ISLAND, MALI, SENEGAL ET ALIA PLUS FRENCH, ARABIC AND BLACK AFRICAN LANGUAGE SERVICES OF VOA, BBC, FRANE INTER, ET ALIA. THEY HAVENO LACK OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WINDOEWS ON OUTSIDE WORLD. (III) THERE HAVE BEEN ALMOST NO OFFICIAL REPORTS ON WAR (MUCH TO UNHAPPINESS OF RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC CORPS) WITH RESULT THAT POLISARIO HAS CONSISTENTLY WON INTERNATIONAL PR WAR. A FACT THAT GIRM IS NOW GRADUALLY COMING TO REALIZE. (IV) ABSENCE OF OFFICIAL REPORTS AND NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF WAR HAS IN NO WAY KEPT INFORMATINON LATEST CLASH AWAY FROM MAURITANIAN PUBLIC. EVERY MAURITANIAN WHO IS INTERESTED HAS RELATIVE OR FRIEND IN DEFENSE MINISTRY OR IN ARMY HEADQUARTERS WHO IS DELIGHTED TO SHARE EVEN MOST ADVERSE AND GORY DETAILS OF LATEST CLASH OVER TEA OR TELEPHONE. RESULT IS THAT SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF LATEST CLASH IS BUZZING AROUND INFORMAL TELEPHONE/FACE-TO-FACE INFORMATION CIRCUITS WITHIN SIX TO EIGHT HOURS AFTER LAST SHOT IS FIRED. AND SINCE MAURITANIAN SOCIETY HAS APPARENTLY ALWAYS WORKED THIS WAY, PRESENT GENERATION DOES NOT FIND THIS INFORMATION SYSTEM IN SLIGHTEST WAY UNUSUAL.

HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 28-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
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